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HEIRLOOM: A Piper's Orchard Abecadarian

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independent artist

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HEIRLOOM

[see audio download for full text: <http://scholars.wlu.ca/thegoose/vol14/iss1/23/>]

ANTIQUE

freckled, scabbed &
spotted Astrakhans
ushered from Russia
heritage strains older
than the Arctic©¹

¹ Non-browning genetically engineered apple approved by the United States Department of Agriculture for commercial planting in 2015.

BOUNTY

gleaned & given
thousands of pounds
of unsellable fruit
circulate to city
food banks

CANOPY
arbors full of stars
five-pointed calyxes
scoring undersides
of apples

(RED) DELICIOUS
"stark's hawkeye"
stocking grocers thick-
skinned, overgrown
bred for its hue, "retains
its cheerful good looks
long after its flavor has departed"
– mealy mouthfeel of
an American classic

EYE

apple of my

FOUND

beneath ivy & thorn,
arching cane & suckering
root, ruin – the forest orchard
“gone to seed”

GRAFTAGE

tree cuttings

implanted into host

stumps sealed w/ wax

to propagate a vanishing line

HEIRLOOM
belonging passed
between generations
a historic homestead
a grove of fruit-bearing trees
totems of memory – an apple,
all the way from Denmark

INDEX²

Arctic
Astrakhan
Belmont
Bietigheimer
Dolgo Crabapple
Dutch Mignonne
Dutchess of Oldenberg
Early Harvest
Esopus Spitzenberg
Golden Russett
Gravenstein
Hawkeye
King
Lubsk Queen
Northern Spy
Rhode Island Greening
Roxbury Russett
Swaar
Tolman Sweet
Wealthy
Wolf River
Yellow Belltower
Yellow Newtown
Yellow Transparent

² All of the apple varieties planted at Piper's Orchard in Carkeek Park, Seattle, Washington.

JEFFERSON'S
favorite: the orange
pippin sweeter with age
vulnerable to cankers &
fireblights, subtle
russetting

KEEPSAKE

apples prized
for their profile &
flavor, revival of
heritage fruit, genome
splicing, giving flower
to centuries-old
species

LORE

heirs of the wild
apples of Tian Shan³,
celestial peaks, producers
of the Almaty,
“Alma-ata” – almighty
Kazakh *Father*
of Apples carried
along the Silk Road
in the bellies of beasts

³ The modern apple as we know it descends from the Russian Astrakhan.

MINNA⁴

Wilhemina Piper
(Pfeifer), master
gardener, mother
to eleven, planted
seedlings at “The Ranch”
handpicked apples
folded into strudel at
her husband's *konditorei*
the sweet shop burned
to the ground, twenty-five
city blocks lost
to the Great Fire

⁴ The matriarch of Piper’s Orchard, Minna Piper was the primary grafter and gardener for the homestead orchard in the late 1800s or early 1900s.

NONESUCH

names like “woolfibbers”

Ozark Gold

Golden Gem

Pound Sweet

Sheepnose

Chenango Strawberry

Piñata

Api Etoile

Pixie Crunch

Winter Banana

Hidden Rose

Spokane Beauty

Maiden’s Blush

American Mother

Moneycrisp

ORIGIN

story: family outings
to Apple Country, Oak Glen
nestled in the foothills of
The San Bernardino Mountains -
at the top of the scenic loop,
I tasted flavors out of hand
Ben Davis, Gravenstein,
Pink Pearl though my father
always took home the sack
of coke-shaped hawkeyes
candy red & sweet
still big in Asia⁵

⁵ Red Delicious remain the most popular apple variety grown and exported from China.

PARENTS

chance seedlings

“the apple doesn’t fall
far from the tree”

SCION

wood entwined w/
rootstock sprouts new
offshoots form vascular
connections, limbs
lifting up living
tissue, cambium green

TOAST

work parties in the woods
stewards impale browned
bread to branches, singers
serenading the orchard
“toast” to its health

URBAN(E)
artisan sparkling
ciders & wines
fermented from
heirloom crop
public food
forest for
the foraging
a bouquet of apples

VOLUNTEER
rogue seed scattered
by bird droppings, vintage stripe
springing forth

WASSAIL⁶

*Blow blow bear well
Spring well in April
Every sprig and every spray
Bear a bushel of apples
Against next new year's day.*

*Health to thee good apple tree
Well to bear pocket full
Hats full, peck full, bushel bag full
Hats full, caps full, bushel bushel sacks full
And my pockets full too, huzzah.*

*Stand fast root
Bear well top
Pray god send us a howling crop.
Every twig apples big
Every bow, apples enow⁷.*

*Hats full, caps full
Full quarter sacks full
Holla boys, holla.*

⁶ Lyrics from traditional wassailing songs.

⁷ Archaic word for 'enough.'

EXOCARP
fleshy fruit
hypanthium
floral cup
corolla forming
edible outer layer

YIELD

two types of windfall:
zephyr & plenty
giving under gentle
pressure, tender
to the touch

SPITZ⁸

Doppelganger of the Westfield
seek-no-further – yellow mottled
dots against an orange-red
backdrop, one of four kinds
raised at Monticello

⁸ Nickname for Espous Spitzenberg.

Notes on the Text



I grew up in the urban megalopolis of Southern California where nature was experienced at a distance. My father loved to take our family on weekend daytrips out to the orchards of Oak Glen that are nestled in the San Bernardino Mountains, and so I developed a particular fondness for apples. I first encountered Piper's Orchard a few years ago, while hiking a trail through Carkeek Park to one of Seattle's popular beaches. Shrouded in bucolic silence, a grove of heirloom apple trees overlooks the trail from a grassy meadow. A small sign posted by the city's parks department provides a limited map and a skeletal history of the site.

I wanted to write a text that could illuminate not only the history of the orchard and those that tended to it, but of the unique apple varieties present in the orchard. I pictured writing HEIRLOOM as a poetic visitor's guide for hikers, families, and passerbys that could provide a sense of connection and wonder, beyond a didactic field guide. And I wanted to take words from that poem and print them on the apples themselves, using vinyl stencils and the light of the sun – to use the orchard as a giant light-sensitive surface and re-engage my love for photography.

Many of my early visits to the orchard were made with my infant son Tomo, who has deeply touched the creation of this work. My son has been slowly acquiring language. The decision to create a visual installation highlighting aspects of poetic text reflects, in part, the aspiration to share my love for words through this work. The text is loosely structured into the form of an abecedarian, or alphabet poem. I chose to build an audio component to this project to provide another point of entry into the work and invited sound engineer Tom Stiles to make sonic recordings of the orchard throughout the seasons, to highlight a sense of place that could be mixed with a studio recording of the poem being read aloud.

HEIRLOOM is part of the outdoor exhibition *Propagation: Heaven and Earth 7*. The project was supported, in part, by an award from 4Culture, funding from Seattle Office of Arts & Culture, and The Awesome Foundation. Recording and production made possible through the Artist Residency Programs at Jack Straw Cultural Center.

SHIN YU PAI is the author of several poetry collections, including *AUX ARCS* (La Alameda, 2013), *Adamantine* (White Pine, 2010), *Sightings* (1913 Press, 2007), and *Equivalence* (La Alameda, 2003). She has exhibited her visual work and collaborations at The Three Arts Club of Chicago, McKinney Avenue Contemporary, International Print Center, Center for Book and Paper Arts at Columbia College, 516 Arts, The Ferguson Gallery at The University of Alabama, The American Jazz Museum, Harvard University, and the University of Texas at Dallas. Her work has been commissioned twice by the Dallas Museum of Art. For more information, visit <http://www.shinyupai.com>.